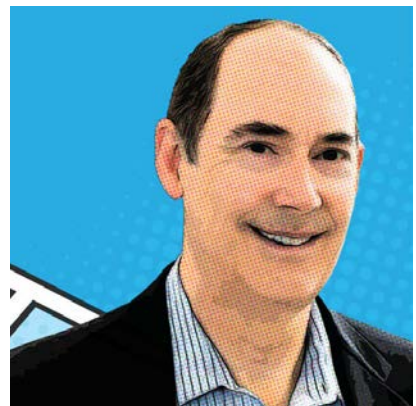


2020 SENIOR HOUSING NEWS

# CHANGEMAKERS

The **pioneers** driving the **future** of senior living



BROUGHT  
TO YOU BY



# Senior living's rapidly changing landscape

Never before have we needed Changemakers as much as we need them today. With the pace of change in 2020 reaching truly unprecedented heights due to the COVID-19 pandemic, industry leaders this year have had to change in ways they never could have imagined.

We're pleased to honor our 2020 class of Changemakers in this collection of exclusive, never-before-seen interview excerpts from a series brought to you by Senior Housing News in collaboration with Yardi.

Read on to learn about how 2020 Changemakers view and manage change, and how they are continuing to drive positive change this year.

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Check out [seniorhousingnews.com/Changemakers](https://seniorhousingnews.com/Changemakers) for the full series.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Mary Leary

President & CEO  
of Mather

“I often hear that we punch above our weight.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- With a hospitality background, Mary Leary has led Mather for 18 years. The company currently is embarking on its newest community development in greater Washington, D.C.
- Leary and Mather spearheaded the term “life plan community,” in 2015.

### Do you have any advice for other senior-living leaders as they embark on change-making efforts at their communities or companies?

Mather prides itself on having a culture of innovation, and since 2009 we’ve had a day-to-day operating philosophy that has been to eliminate impossibilities, and that has worked really well for us. In 2019, we updated our brand and we do have a new, trademarked tagline that is to *Be Nextraordinary*. We’re always seeking to surpass the ordinary in everything that we do.

Change-making is a mindset. Going back to 2004, we’ve shared a daily quote to encourage employees to think differently. In order to

create something new, you really have to be ready to abandon the existing. Again, that’s why COVID-19, I think, is going to catapult the industry forward because we’re having to abandon, at least temporarily, ways in which we have been providing services, which will give us an opportunity to rethink how we may want to do things differently going forward.

We encourage people to be curious. A team member once gave me a Curious George stuffed animal because I’m always asking questions. We encourage people to try new things. We actually measure this annually through our resident customer and employee engagement surveys, and we seek to have a high percentage of people say that they do try new things.

We’re always looking for the challenges and then seeking ways to solve them. We, also, as I mentioned before try to take incremental steps. Otherwise I think one would be paralyzed by the magnitude of change that they may desire. We also think that if you’re not feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the step, you may not be moving the needle far enough.

We favor incremental steps or initiatives that can be terminated within a reasonable period of time if not successful, and always look to identify multiple exit ramps. We continually look beyond senior living for ideas. As a foodie and a travel enthusiast, I’m always looking at restaurant and hotel design, menu offerings and more to see what we might be able to do differently in serving older adults. Last, but probably most important, we learn about our customers in every way possible from anecdotal focus groups to more in-depth quantitative surveys and analysis.



COMPANY  
HEADQUARTERS

Evanston, Illinois



### Do you think that the senior living industry is changing fast enough to keep up with the times?

Actually, I think the industry is doing very well. All you need to do is to look at all the articles that you post in Senior Housing News. The breadth of providers who are implementing different models is very impressive to me. I think COVID-19, however, is going to require providers to change up even more in ways we don’t even know yet. I think that there are a lot of creative and forward-thinking providers out there who, hopefully, like Mather, are already thinking through what the impact will be because I think that this has been a life-changing event for our entire country and the world, and there are going to be new ways of doing things that we haven’t even thought of yet.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Dwayne Clark

Founder & CEO  
of Aegis Living

“I think people are okay with yesterday’s vanilla model of how they operate”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Dwayne Clark founded Aegis in 1997 and has since grown the company to 32 communities, with eight in development.
- Going to great lengths to recreate nostalgic moments critical to memory care, the company placed a Chris-Craft boat in the courtyard of its Mercer Island community.

**Aegis is known for innovative building designs. Did you always want distinctive buildings, and how have you been able to accomplish that?**

I think one of the crimes in senior housing is that we haven’t been particularly innovative in architecture. There is too much mimicking or copying of our competitors. Some people look at buildings like, “Oh, I like the dining rooms, I’m going to go for a dining room like that.” You just keep evolving from the same footprint and it doesn’t really show any creativity.

People are moving into this building for a specific reason in this neighborhood. So, one of the things we became highly sensitive to is asking, what are the things that people value about this neighborhood? We knew once we went down that road that we were not going to copycat our buildings like some of the bigger companies do. You know their buildings because if you’ve seen one you’ve seen 500.

It’s more expensive to be in this isolated building because it costs more on architectural plans and design layout and everything else.

We started asking people, “Why do you live in West Seattle?” We heard responses like, “I like Alki Beach.” “I like the view of the ocean.” “I like the nautical themes.” So we said, “Okay, we’ll build a building in West Seattle.” We know these are some important characteristics that we’re going to build here because we want this to be part of the neighborhood. We want them to feel like they are moving into their homes. We are sensitive to that.

When we built on Mercer Island, there were lifestyles that people wanted. We’ve put a Chris-Craft boat in the courtyard. We want people to feel like it’s home, to feel like it’s something they’re accustomed to, but we will also want to evoke great memories.

That’s what makes people want to move into our buildings, the feeling that, “I remember when Dad had this Chris-Craft. We used to go

# Aegis Living

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

Bellevue, Washington



water skiing on it.” We use that to tell stories. It will warm people up to the architecture, and I just don’t think most operators think like that. That’s one of our competitive advantages.

**Do you agree with the statement that to be a changemaker you have to be a risk-taker?**

I think you have to quantify risk. It’s not good enough to say, “I’m a risk-taker.” What does that mean? Does that mean you’re at the firm every other Thursday? It’s not good enough just to be a risk-taker, you have to quantify risk. This COVID-driven economic downturn is a great example.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Michael Schonbrun

Founder, President & CEO  
of Balfour Senior Living

“Part of the fun in getting up every day is how to push the envelope.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Michael Schonbrun founded Balfour based on changing the landscape to create a place his own aging mother, Madeline, would want to live.
- Now with six communities, Balfour’s vision is to be the most admired senior living company in America.

### When you started Balfour, did you have a goal of changing senior living by bringing something new to the market?

Yes. I came to the senior housing world after about 25 years in health care delivery. My mother lived in three different communities after my father died unexpectedly while he was in his mid-sixties. One in Boulder, one in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, when I lived down there for a short time, and then another one in South Denver. I was shocked by how institutional the settings were, even at the “best senior communities,” and was also struck by how inadequate the activities program was.

Overall, she was reasonably happy and the thought of her living alone in an apartment in New York without her now-deceased husband and having somewhat more limited mobility was the factor that led her to move closer to her only child, me. Though she was not a chronic complainer, she just wondered why the menu was so limited, why the activities program was so limited, Bingo and Bible study classes, and why

the transportation was limited, because as a New Yorker, like many New Yorkers, she really was not used to driving.

When the time came for me to do something entrepreneurial, it occurred to me that this was an opportunity to use my mother as a model. Her name was Madeline, and it became one of the guidelines of the company: What would Madeline want? A much higher quality food. We spent more on food. One of the communities that she was at had a very robust transportation program with private cars. Nothing else about that particular community was very good, but that was great.

It struck me that I could use Madeline’s experience as a bit of a template for what might work for other people. I created a little Venn diagram that is people with resources and then a second one of people with taste and where they overlap, that’s our market. Some folks can’t afford it, can appreciate it, some people can afford it but don’t appreciate it or don’t want it. It’s that intersection, and it’s bigger than we thought. The reality is, this doesn’t have to be a lifestyle that you’re going to support for the next 50 years because frankly, when you move in, you’ve got 10 to 15 years maybe. Folks can do that.

### What are you most proud of accomplishing with Balfour?

I’d say a couple of things. I’ve always wanted us to be medically competent, which meant round-the-clock nursing care in assisted living. I’ve also wanted to have assisted living close to independent living. And on the campus, there would always be nursing 24/7 coverage.

That means when somebody has a slip and fall, we don’t immediately call 911. We can take care of those cases.

A second item is we were among the first to build ground-up senior living communities in



Louisville, Colorado



a city. One potential investor, who ended up not investing with us, said, why do seniors even want to be close to a city? It should be out in the country with the birds and the butterflies and God’s little waiting room. Literally, that’s what this character said.

I said, look, at a certain age you may not be able to be as physically active, but that doesn’t mean you don’t enjoy going to restaurants, getting to museums, going to concerts, getting to live sporting events and not having to travel a half-hour each way to get there.

The third piece that we think we really pioneered and we think we still are leagues ahead of anyone else in the business is that our communities are designed to fit the neighborhood. It does not look like the sunrise Victorian mansion that gets plopped down into areas that don’t have Victorian mansions. We use the local vernacular. We use architects who appreciate that every town and region has some distinct architectural items. As my old art history professor at Yale, Vincent Scully, once said: Buildings should have a dialogue with one another across the ages.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Richard Hutchinson

CEO  
of Discovery Senior Living

“Seniors housing has no choice but to change.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Richard J. Hutchinson co-founded Discovery Senior Living and has since grown the company to build and manage 55 communities.
- His claims to change include the development of an entirely new sales culture at Discovery, as well as the launch of a business intelligence division.

### Is there an example you can provide of how Discovery used a particular piece of data to make an operational change?

Sure. Granularity of a service level profitability. Our entire experiential living model that we've rolled out in the last 12 months where we are starting the customization of service delivery really feeds into consumer desires. That is part of it because now we're able to see and calculate the profitability of delivering meal services, and having menu options and the things we're doing as part of our program.

You can't do that without data. The consumer behaviors, the way they're

always going to want what we have for services, I'm convinced of that, but the methodology of gaining those services, how they are going to consume our services and product, is changing very rapidly and we have to change with it because they're not going to accept the answers of the past. If there's no flexibility, that's not going to work.

### On the flip side, can you provide an example of a time when you tried to create a change and it didn't go according to plan or wasn't able to be accomplished?

I could probably provide 100 of them. [Chuckles.] I'll give you one that jumps out at me, and comes to mind and I'll tie it into something that I was most proud of early on. I was very proud that we were a performance-based organization. We had a performance-based compensation plan for our sales and marketing folks, and that worked really well. About a decade into that, I tried to push that performance-based compensation program over to the operations side.

In my mind, it made sense to have folks who were very successful be able to tie their compensation to performance. I learned some tough lessons there. It is difficult if you don't communicate well. What sometimes we think is obvious is not always obvious. We didn't do great on communications – I didn't properly communicate why I was trying to do that. Then I underestimated inertia, the amount of force required to make changes of that scale in an industry where nobody else was doing it,



COMPANY  
HEADQUARTERS

Bonita Springs, Florida



and so it was crazy to a lot of the operational folks. There was a lot of fear.

I think the biggest lesson I learned is, when you're doing changes, not only do you have to communicate it well, but you have to understand it affects people. I think I found that out the hard way. These people, they have life goals, they're working their plan, everyone is running their own race, and then when you inject uncertainty, it creates anxiety and anxiety then creates a distraction, and distraction obviously affects performance.

That is the real lesson: understand the effect on real people. Then certainly make sure you're communicating and getting the buy-in. And never underestimate a fear of change.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Loren Shook

Founder and CEO  
of Silverado

“I think there are opportunities beyond what we’re doing today, without a doubt.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Loren Shook co-founded Silverado as a standalone memory care offering built on the basis of the social model for assisted living.
- Today, the company has proven outcomes for its residents and has developed countless research partnerships toward preventing and caring for those with memory impairment.

**Do you agree with the statement that changemakers are risk-takers? How would you describe yourself in terms of your risk tolerance?**

Changemakers definitely are risk-takers. There’s no question about it. It’s much easier to just stay under the radar and just to do it the way you’re doing it. When I first started Silverado, it was such an enormous change that I was proposing to the industry’s norm of bringing in the medical piece, the clinical piece, the 24-hour seven-day-a-week licensed nurses, master’s level social workers, and don’t even get me started with use of pets and children coming in.

A lot of people thought we would just be bankrupt day one – that no one would pay for our services because the industry in large part was seen as a housing industry, not a health care industry.

Memory care services today are 90% health care and 10% housing. Not to say you don’t want to have a nice place to live with your memory impairment problem, but you’ve got to be able to take care of those people clinically, or you’re not going to have a good quality of life. Just getting anyone to talk to me and getting anyone to invest in it, that’s the experience of changemakers across the board when they’re making changes.

The immediate response is love is greater than fear. People come from fear and go like, “Oh no, can’t be done.” They throw a million things at you as to why it can’t be done. What I do is I look through and I do a calculated risk analysis. Is this something that I think can work? Certainly talking to everybody that I can about it, but a lot of people say it’s not going to work and you shouldn’t do it. That doesn’t mean I don’t go ahead and do it.

If you try to go by the majority of opinions depending on who you’re talking to, most of the time the majority of opinion is going to be, “Don’t do it.” If you happen to be talking to a room full of Elon Musks well, you’d probably get a different point of view. There aren’t a lot of rooms full of Elon Musk’s in the world. I think a lot of changemakers may have the same strength but I’ve got a strength that is just innate in me and that is being able to see



COMPANY  
HEADQUARTERS

Irvine, California



things others don’t see: the connection of things and ideations, a term used for it. For me, looking and seeing the social model living and how people want to live is walking into not a lobby but walking into the living room and having a dog and a cat and children and that sort of thing, having a normalcy of the environment.

The chair of neurology at UCSD, Dr. Leon Thal, came out to Silverado to prove that we couldn’t re-teach people how to walk, or feed themselves again, and the chairs of medicine followed along to watch the fight. Steve Winner and I did a half-day case conference with them to prove it worked. He basically said, “I don’t know how you’re doing it — nobody in the world is doing it — but keep it up.” You go with your gut as a changemaker as to what can be.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Brenda Bacon

President and CEO  
of Brandywine Living

“We don’t have to be a junior version of the hotel industry or a junior version of the health care industry.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Brenda Bacon founded Brandywine and has since grown the company to operate 32 communities.
- Bacon has also long held leadership roles with Argentum where she has inspired widespread industry change.

**You’ve described yourself as taking a “command and control” approach to change, yet you also show flexible leadership in terms of learning from anyone and adjusting course. Do you think part of your ability to lead change is blending those two different skill sets?**

I learn something new every day. I like to be ahead of things and not behind them. It’s very hard to hurt my feelings. I’ve often said — and people know this about me — that you can say anything because nobody can hurt my feelings

but my kids, and they do regularly. That job is done. [Chuckles.] I don’t take offense. I don’t see battles as personal battles.

If you don’t agree with me, then let’s talk about it. I can be passionate about those things, but I’m also listening. I like to do new things. I’m easily bored. I like to learn and figure out how we can position ourselves better.

No matter what I’m working on, whether it’s Brandywine, whether it’s the industry, whether it’s on a board of a company or anything like that, I have this curiosity to try to see the next thing and around the corner. I’m not saying that it’s easy or always turns out to be a perfect vision, but I’m a risk-taker by nature. I just like to learn and do things. I do listen to people. Once I want to go out, and I believe it’s the right thing for us to do, then I am very much, “We are doing this.”

If the team is convinced that this is the right thing to do, then we’re going to do it. Let’s say that I love working with a passionate team who’s as devoted as I am to what we’re doing. I love what I do. I don’t think I could do this if I worked in this corporate America. Maybe I could.

I like to be surrounded by people who care



BRANDYWINE LIVING

*Life is Beautiful*

COMPANY  
HEADQUARTERS

Mount Laurel, New Jersey



about what they’re doing. I don’t know. I guess all of those things are true.

Everybody brings something to the table. Everybody’s a unique person, and I find stuff to appreciate about all those people, and they make me laugh. I have a team of people that are just great.



## CHANGEMAKERS

# Charlie Trefzger

President & CEO  
of ALG Senior

“The world has shifted,  
but we pivoted  
early.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- In 2020 alone, Charlie Trefzger led ALG Senior (formerly Affinity Living) through an organizational change and the shift to a new company name.
- Trefzger’s leadership of ALG Senior’s 130 communities involves efforts to develop a more affordable assisting living model with an innovative approach to care delivery and payment.

### Describe a change or changes that you’ve led at ALG Senior or in the senior living industry that you are most proud of.

I am proud of the focus that we have had on not just being a senior housing provider, but a health and wellness provider within the senior living industry. Most of our residents are elderly, 80-plus years of age, and have multiple health conditions. They and their families have decided on an assisted living community, because their loved ones have functional or cognitive impairments that make it no longer safe for them to live at home.

Quite often they need assistance with their daily living activities or managing their medications.

In order to provide the best quality care to our residents, we have health care providers

onsite to deliver medical care, including physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. This obviates the need for our family members to transport their loved ones to a doctor’s office. If there’s a change in the resident’s condition, we can intervene quickly and hopefully mitigate the need for unnecessary transfers to the emergency room.

We have been able to reduce avoidable hospitalizations, and we know that hospitalizations for older adults can be associated with adverse events, including delirium, hospital-acquired infections and unnecessary medications. We have onsite therapy, including physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. We work very closely with home health services, as well as hospice services.

We provide these services inside of a proactive approach, so that we can reduce the need for skilled care in the future. I would say those things leading up to an integrated health care model is what I’m most proud of. That’s moving a mountain. It takes a team.

### In changemaking obviously that means you need to take risks. How do you describe your tolerance for risk?

I have a pretty high tolerance for risk. However, it’s risk with a calculation, though I’m quite certain that we will be successful. Sometimes it takes longer than I would like to be successful, but when you’re in charge of your destiny, you have to be able to take those risks. If it takes a little longer than you first thought, you have to have perseverance and stick-to-itiveness to get it accomplished.

### Is the industry changing fast enough to keep up with what you see are the pressures that are shaping it?



COMPANY  
HEADQUARTERS

Hickory, North Carolina



Not really. I think we tend to be followers instead of leaders. We let other people take the lead, when we need to do it. It’s the perception of the medical industry that the assisted living industry is reluctant to embrace medical professionals and incorporate them into the senior housing world. This isn’t coming from just me. I’m a member of the American Medical Directors Associations Committee on Assisted Living, and I hear this directly from chief medical officers all over the country.

They believe that the only way to solve this is with federal oversight. I, of course, don’t agree with that concept. I think that we, as an industry, have to encourage one another to adapt to this integrated care model. We can tap into the medical expertise of our care partners and integrate our record keeping and our communication and create interoperable models that allow us to seamlessly transfer information and data to one another. That’s what the future is all about.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Arun Paul

Founder of Priya Living

“The country’s aging, but it’s also becoming more diverse.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Arun Paul never had traditional senior living in mind when he set out to create Priya Living; rather he was trying to come up with a concept his independent aging parents and their friends would enjoy.
- The Priya model is based on a la carte services from laundry to meal delivery. This keeps costs for residents down and enables choice and independence.

### Do you think that senior living is changing fast enough?

I have a couple of observations there. My experience is that there’s this idea in the industry that “This is what senior living is.” What I mean by that is when we entered with our model on services and how we went about doing it, I heard a lot of feedback, and people didn’t say it directly, but it definitely felt like people were saying, “Well, that’s not really senior living.”

I think there’s this idea that people in the industry like to talk about, a needs-driven product, and that’s usually linked with acuity but I think there are some problems with their thinking. First of all, I think the industry has been focused on physical needs and not

emotional needs, which I think is a very important distinction. I think most consumers or residents think about their emotional needs first. It’s about helping people be happy.

### Can you talk about a time when you tried to implement something that didn’t work or an effort that you made at changing the way things are usually done and had to abandon or change course?

Well, I think with this company when we started, we had an approach that didn’t work for what we wanted to do in terms of building these communities, and to be honest with you, our first approach to this was a more traditional model. We were going to build basically a traditional IL community.

That didn’t work because there was too much doubt in this demographic and just the whole idea of ethnic senior living. We ended up taking a different approach, which is a more stripped-down version. It was a great thing actually and ended up being a great thing even though that’s not what we set out to do.

### Can you describe how Priya has centralized the production of programming?

When we were first brainstorming about this, we really did think a lot about Peloton. We said, okay, we’re going to get studio space in Oakland. We’re going to bring our instructors there. It’s going to be high production value.



COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

San Francisco, California



Obviously, we realized, you can’t do that in the middle of a pandemic.

What we did instead is, we created these packages that we mail to instructors at their home. The packages have high-definition video camera equipment, sound equipment, there’s a backdrop, there’s lighting, a little instruction package on how to do their setup at home.

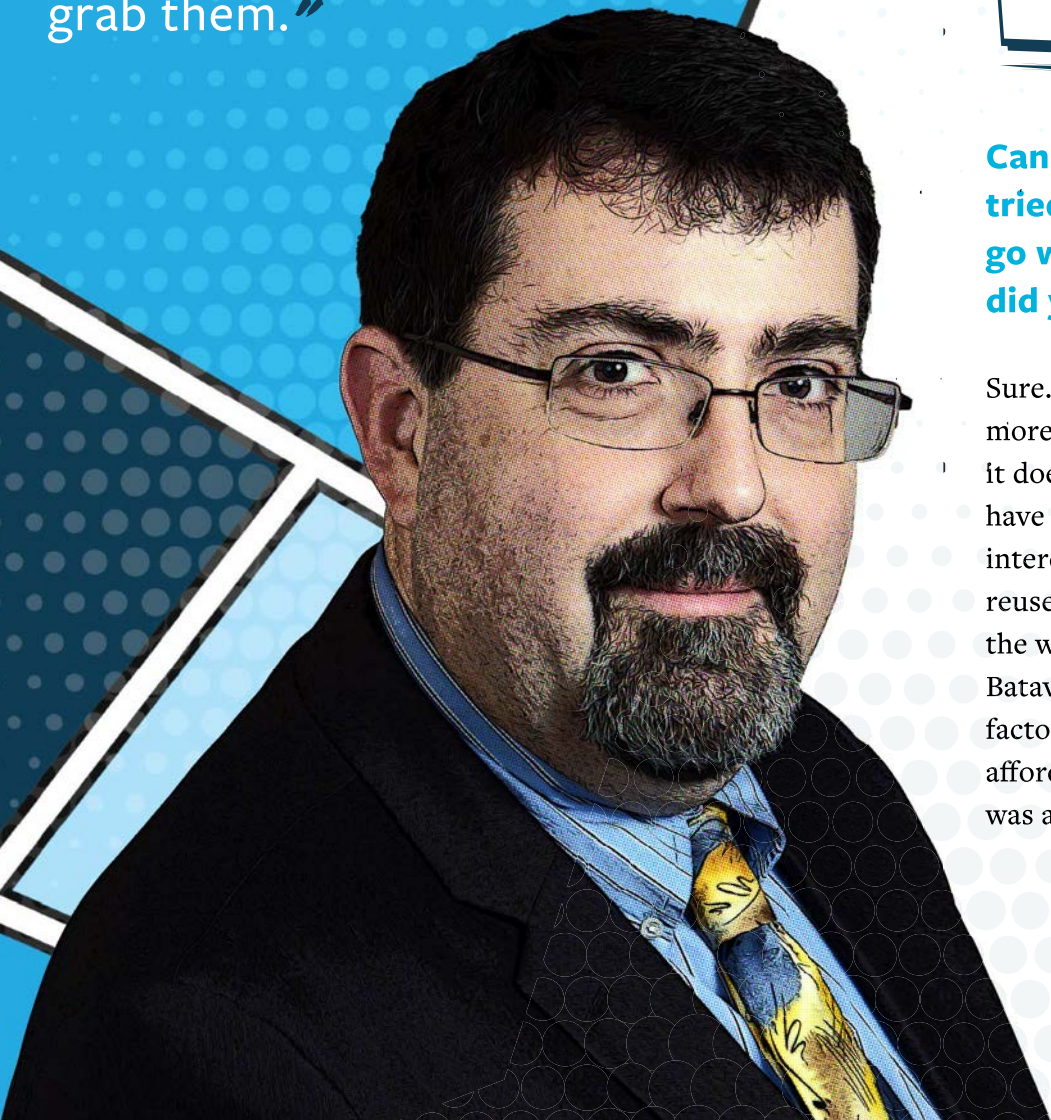
The other thing we like about the digital programming route is it’s asynchronous. You don’t have to take your yoga class on Tuesday at 10 a.m. You can take it Friday at 5 p.m. or whenever you want to. I think this experience has opened the door for people mentally, too, to be open to this.

CHANGEMAKERS

# David Block

Director of Development of Evergreen Real Estate Group

“Sometimes the new opportunities are so clear that you can simply reach out and grab them.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- David Block has led Evergreen Real Estate Group to the development of entirely new senior living partnerships, such as Chicago Housing Authority-subsidized senior apartments situated above new Chicago Public Library Branches; and a recent hospital conversion to senior housing.
- Evergreen has also made senior housing more affordable through its use of low-income housing tax credits.

### Can you describe a time when you tried to lead the change that didn't go well? What happened and what did you learn from that?

Sure. This is not necessarily senior housing. It's more on the family housing side, but I think it does affect anybody and honestly, it might have gone better if it were senior so there's an interesting lesson there. There was an adaptive reuse project that we tried to undertake out in the western suburbs of Chicago, a place called Batavia. It was a really interesting historic factory building that we tried to convert into affordable family housing. We thought that it was a big enough site and a sufficiently historic

building. It was a decent-sized project. It was about 100 units, but it was in the scheme of things not that big of a project.

We thought that the community would be fully in support of what we're proposing to do. IHDA (Illinois Housing Development Authority) was firmly behind it and actually the local historic preservation community was firmly behind it. We had a strong group of advocates, mostly church-based advocates who thought that affordable housing was a necessary thing and they were in support of our proposal, but the local community just did not want this development to happen.

I suppose you would call it NIMBY. It was a long battle. This was about 18 months, during which we battled through zoning hearings and historic preservation hearings, planning commission hearings, and at the end of the day, we were forced to withdraw from that project. It was obviously disappointing to us, especially in this time when affordable housing is so necessary, to have a group of neighbors object to something when we thought it was pretty clear that there was a huge need for this. We're not the only developer. We're certainly not the first developer to run into something like this.

### For other leaders who are looking to embark on change-making efforts, what advice do you have for them?

I would say keep your eyes and ears peeled for opportunities to do something different and exciting. Real estate is by its nature conservative because obviously, a lot of money



### COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

Chicago, Illinois



is involved. You need to convince a number of financial partners of the rightness of a proposal. I think many firms are understandably reluctant to go too far afield of what worked for them before. I think there are opportunities in the world of mixed-use developments of adaptive reuse projects, maybe of new ways of financing projects.

I've always believed that the firms that are able to see those opportunities and take advantage of them are the ones that will rise to the top. It's been our experience that opportunities beget further opportunities. Our phone has been ringing pretty regularly with communities that want to talk about the library. When people see a model that makes sense, they get excited about it. If you can take that first step and do something different and exciting, it will open other doors for you.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# John Cochrane

President & CEO  
of HumanGood

“I think the industry can and must move faster to anticipate and embrace change, and the numbers tell the story.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Change has been at the core of John Cochrane's leadership of HumanGood, including its formation stemming from the 2015 affiliation of be.group and American Baptist Homes of the West.
- Cochrane has a unique perspective as CEO of an organization that provides both affordable senior housing and non-profit CCRCs.

### Do you consider yourself someone who thrives on change or are you actually more cautious by nature?

I think any leader in this field has to thrive on change to a point. I do think the contrary note there is — and this will probably surprise people — I am probably more deliberate and considerate than people might think I am. I don't go into things cold. I do a lot of reading. I do a lot of thinking. I do a lot of exploring.

While it may appear to an outsider that I move quickly on something, I would say there's probably a lot more going on behind the scenes that people don't see and that is deliberate consideration and understanding of our field. Again, constantly sourcing, constantly reading, constantly engaging in conversations. What you don't want to do as a change agent is just knee-jerk and veer like a billiard ball.

You've got to be able to see long term. You've got to have one foot in today and one foot in five years from now and navigate those two things and keep those keys together.

### Can you point to a change that has been forced and do you approach that differently from other types of change?

I think there are many external forces that either force your hand or create clarity or a sense of urgency.

The Great Recession is one perfect example of that where I think for a lot of us that forces us into a recognition of, “Oh my gosh. What got us here is not going to get us through the next five years and is not going to get us where we need to be.” Whether we're comfortable with change or not we need to get comfortable with change,

human good

### COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

Pleasanton, California



because we have to adapt to circumstances that are out of our control.

I think you see something similar going on with health care. There's a dramatic shift in health care going on. You can like it or not, but that's irrelevant. It is changing your world. For people who thrive on change, it's probably an easier time for them than for others, but then it comes down to that same choice of whether you like it or not.

## CHANGEMAKERS

# Marc Vorkapich

Principal and CEO  
of Watercrest Senior Living

“My modus operandi has always been to engage teams in identifying needs for change.”



## ★ CHANGEMAKER 2020 ★

- Marc Vorkapich co-founded Watercrest in 2012 after more than 20 years in health care and with a goal of shifting away from what he calls a “hierarchical” approach to senior living operations.
- At the center of his changemaking efforts, Vorkapich credits collaboration and leadership development across the company’s 16 communities, and counting.

### Is the senior living industry changing fast enough, given new consumer expectations, new technologies, more competition and other pressures and changes?

Overall, I consider the pace of constructive dialogue to be healthy. Understanding that the pace of change varies market to market, as an industry, I believe we are working well together to share ideas, resources and solutions offering a wealth

of information for change agents to do with what they may.

With that in mind, at Watercrest we are less focused on the number of changes or the speed, but rather how meaningful the change may be to seniors, their families, and our associates. The number of ideas are infinite and can result in busy-ness rather than improved sound business practices.

**How do you determine whether a change is worth pursuing, in terms of the impact that it will have? Do you look at data like satisfaction surveys to figure out what changes will have the biggest impact?**

When evaluating change, data is only second to how closely the impact aligns with our collective vision and values. The efficacy of implementing change has the prerequisite of those involved being able to identify with its purpose, creating the passion behind the work that lies ahead.

**Changemakers are risk-takers. Agree or disagree? How do you describe your own risk tolerance?**

I would agree often that is the case. However, when a call for change derives



### COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

Vero Beach, Florida



from a desire to serve something greater than ourselves, any sense of risk is far outweighed by the depth of purpose. My risk tolerance is high, as my entire career over 27 years has developed by having faith that I and others surrounding me have been equipped for what lies ahead.



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